

Behind the Gavel: The Life Story of a Judge
Transcript of Interview

Participant: **Judge Daniel C. Villanueva**
Interviewers and Encoders: Chloe G. Felix, Kenneth Villanueva, Ian Dela Cruz
Date of the Interview (mm/dd/yy): 09 / 20 / 20
Place of the interview: Metro Manila (Online)
Transcribing data:
Time started: 2 : 22 pm
Time ended: 2 : 48 pm
Duration: 26 minutes

Line #	Speaker	Text	Inference
		<i>Due to some technical difficulties / internet related issues encountered during the interview, there were questions which were answered by the participant directly based on the script provided to him prior to the interview.</i> <i>(These questions can be identified with a numbered item with the Speaker column left blank and the questions italicized.)</i>	
1	Interviewee	We can start.	
2	Chloe	Okay.	
		I Personal Profile Questions	
3		<i>Can you tell us something about your personal background, your complete name, age, and nationality?</i>	
4	Interviewee	I am Judge Daniel C. Villanueva. C as in Chua and I was Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 49 Judge, from year 2011 to 2020; I was Lucena Regional Trial Court Branch 54 Judge, from 2006 to 2011; and from 1987 to 2006, I was Manila Assistant Prosecutor.	Judge Daniel Chua Villanueva has dedicated 33 years of his life and counting, in public service in the judiciary, starting as Manila's Assistant Prosecutor to Regional Trial Court Judge in Lucena and Manila.

5		<i>What course did you take?</i>	
6	Interviewee	Now I graduated from the University of the Philippines, UP Diliman, AB Political Science Class '72, I was college scholar for four(4) semesters, that means two years on Half Tuition I graduated, UP College of Law 1978; Passed the Bar Exams of 1978, w/ a grade of 85.675%; Chloe, I believe your next question is about my siblings, right? Chloe?	He has an excellent educational background, having studied in one of the most reputable universities in the Philippines It can be deduced that he is very diligent in his studies since he took pre-law as a scholar for four semesters on one half tuition fee in UP Diliman, completed law proper at the same university, and passed the Bar Exams with a high grade of 85.675 %.
7	Chloe	Yes po. About.. (interrupted)	
8	Interviewee	There is a question on my guideline that says, that asked, that is asking how many siblings do I have.	
9	Chloe	Opo, Yes po. That's Ian's question po.	
10	Interviewee	Are we following that guidelines?	
11	Chloe/Ian	Yes po. Yes Sir.	
12	Ian	So sir may we ask, how many brothers and sisters do you have or siblings sir.	
13	Interviewee	Ok I have three siblings. Two sisters. One is a successful restaurant businesswoman and the other a language teacher at Hong Kong University or University of Hong Kong and my youngest brother is a licensed criminologist and a trader.	He has three siblings, all successful in their chosen profession. One is a successful restaurant businesswoman and the other a language teacher at Hong Kong University or University of Hong Kong and my youngest brother is a licensed criminologist and a trader. His pride and fondness for his family is evident with

		I have 3 children, one is at present, you didn't ask that but I volunteered. If you don't mind, I volunteered. (interrupted) Do you got me?	how he volunteered to discuss about his family.
14	Chloe	Yes po.	
15	Interviewee	Well I have a daughter who is at present, an assistant prosecutor in Pasay, City (interrupted) (There is a feedback here I don't know why). I have a son who is taking up engineering and I have a young daughter who just graduated valedictorian and is now entering grade 7. Okay, next question please. Who would like to have the pleasure of asking me what my hobbies or interests are, that's the fourth question on the list?	It can be inferred that he is a loving father who proudly speaks of his children and their achievements; His eldest follows his footstep as Assistant Prosecutor in Pasay City, and his youngest who just graduated as Valedictorian in her primary year. <i>(He is very proud in sharing the achievements of his children.)</i>
16	Chloe	Kenneth, it's your turn to ask. Kenneth.	
17	Kenneth	Oh yah, sorry, it's my turn.	
18	Chloe	It's ok.	
19	Kenneth	Oh, What are your personal hobbies or interests?	
20	Interviewee	My no. 1 hobby is reading, (interrupted) By the way panel, are you hearing feedback? Are or are you not? There is? (interrupted) What should we do about it? Ok. Anyways, my no 1 hobby is reading, and I'm an avid student of Politics, History, & Current Events. I love to surf the Internet and I am very interested in chess and table tennis.	Very much in line with his profession, he is into reading and politics, history and current events. More interesting though is his love for surfing the internet and playing table tennis.
21	Ian	(interrupted) Is there anything else you want to add?	

22	Interviewee	Well I am following the guide ..., in fact I would prefer to answer... Your 5 th question and 7 th are asking about my (indistinctive sound)... father and my parents	
		II Family Environment	
23	Ian	So, with that sir, may we know your answer on how will you describe your relationship with your parents? And what did your parents do for a living when you were a child? Do they have the same profession/work now?	
24	Interviewee	Ok my father was a successful textile businessman. He owned the Filipinas Textile Mills in Cainta. He was well-known in the community. My mother was a housewife. I am of Chinese ancestry. I enjoyed very good relationship with my parents. I also enjoyed mutually supportive relationship with my siblings.	Their family is well off, having a successful textile business in Cainta. He has described his relationship with his parents as a very good one and his relationship with his siblings as mutually supportive – an indication that he looks at relationships in two ways.
25		<i>What was your family home like, when you were a child?</i>	
26	Interviewee	In answer to question no 8, my family home was warm and happy. We were never seriously impoverished. We have domestic staff, household help and drivers; Brothers and sisters have studied at the Hope Christian High School, and later at the Grace Christian High School, where the faculty were mostly American missionaries. Does anyone want to ask the next question?	His description of their family home speaks of warmth and happiness which can be attributed to the conveniences that he has enjoyed growing up. It is evident that he grew up privileged enough to have domestic helpers and drivers around.
27	Ian	So, with that being said, how does it compare to the house you live in now	

28	Interviewee	Well at present, we have the same, I am enjoying the same relatively loving home environment and atmosphere. We are middle class in economic status but quote and unquote “higher class” if you will, there’s a term for that in aspirations and philosophical outlook of life. But above all, in the family, education is and has always been the number one priority.	He has also emphasized education as and has always been their families’ number 1 priority.
29		<i>Are you better off now than your family was when you were a small child?</i>	
30	Interviewee	Answer to question number 10, my father was more financially successful, being a businessman. But at present, I, my family and I enjoy almost the same comfort, amenities in life and financial security as were the case, as was the case during the time of my father	He admits that his father was more financially successful. However, his family still enjoy almost the same comfort, amenities and financial security in life.
31		<i>How can you describe your childhood?</i>	
32	Interviewee	No 11 is about childhood.	
33	Chloe	Yes po.	
34	Interviewee	My childhood was fun, care-free; we played with kids in our neighborhood; and later, our peer social circle, like many others I supposed, revolved around our school classmates, both in high school and at UP.	His childhood memories are characterized by fun and being carefree, having given the opportunity to play with kids in their neighborhood and to socialize in schools.
35		<i>What was your most memorable childhood experience? Why?</i>	
36	Interviewee	No 12, my most memorable childhood experience: I cannot recall when I reviewed the list and I ‘ve tried my best to recall. I just could not recall any particular joyful or traumatic event.	There could have not been any significantly momentous or traumatic event during his childhood.
37		<i>What was your dream as a child? And Why that dream?</i>	

38	Interviewee	But I'll tell you about my dream, that's in response to question no 13. And as far as I could remember, it has always center or revolve around the concept or idea of being of service to the community, of being involved in some public sector activity.	Even as a child, he dreamed of being of service to the public and the community.
39		<i>What is the first "word" that comes to your mind when you think about your family and why?</i>	
40	Interviewee	The fourteenth question asked if I could associate a single word with my family, I thought about it and the word that came to mine was "Solidarity." In both families during that time of my Daddy and my present family, I believe that there was Harmony in thoughts and deeds among members of the same family; and two other words probably to describe the situation were the words Cooperation and Mutual Support.	He associated "Solidarity" to both his families (with his parents and siblings and his wife and children). This association illustrates the closeness and harmony within their family. He also added two words which are "Cooperation" and "Mutual Support". The pictures he shared with the group depict that closeness.
		III Life's Milestone Questions	
41		<i>Describe 2 KEY MOMENTS in your life?</i> • <i>Did they lead to changes in your well-being (if so, describe)?</i> <i>How do you think these key moments changed your outlook in life? (dreams and aspirations)</i>	

42	Interviewee	15th question asks me of 2 key moments in my life. I think that question was suggested by Ken. And the two key moments that I recall was to study politics and law at UP and number 2, to enter government service. My dad was more or less expecting me to follow his footsteps as a businessman as was traditional in the Chinese-Filipino community at that time. Everybody has only one occupation in mind and that is to go to business. But my idea was to study at UP, and during my time UP Diliman was a hotbed of political ferment and that situation later on made my father worried. My decision to pursue law at that time was unorthodox because everyone I knew was raring and eager to join and jump in the world of business and power. But my father was supportive of my studies and my ambition. Believing I could be a good asset in his business empire.	Despite his father being hesitant with his dream to study politics, he still decided to pursue it even though it was not really such a notable choice of work at that time. He is very pursuant in his dream to be involved in some service to the community and this would also be aligned on how his parent fully supports him in his decision.
43		<i>What are some of the BEST events you can remember from your life?</i> • <i>When did that happen?</i> • <i>How did they affect your well-being/that of your family?</i> • <i>How do you think these BEST moments changed your outlook in life? (dreams and aspirations)</i> <i>What was your first job and what were your specific roles?</i>	

44	Interviewee	I would combine my answers to questions 16 and 21. Some of the best events of my life; well, the first was to enter public service. I was first employed, my first employment as a young lawyer in my late 20's after graduation and after passing the bar was to be a candidate NBI Agent. Why did I decide on that part? The reason was personal because at that time the Director of the NBI (Director Bugarin) was a fraternity brod in the Upsilon Sigma Phi, UP and he was complaining that there were no "Brods" (Upsilonian) applying or working in his agency, then after the EDSA Revolution, I applied & was appointed as an Assistant City Prosecutor of Manila, and this was consistent with my childhood dream of working in the public sector, to be of some service to the community, and it was also consistent with my goal of joining the judiciary.	He dreamt of being of service to the public and aimed at joining the judiciary. He accomplished that by taking up AB Political Science and law, and then working as a prosecutor and eventually as the RTC Judge in Manila.
45		<i>What are some of the WORST things you can remember from your life?</i> • <i>When did they happen?</i> • <i>How did they affect your well-being/ that of your family?</i> • <i>How do you think these WORST moments changed your outlook in life? (dreams and aspirations)</i>	
46	Interviewee	17th question is quite interesting. What were the worst things in life. I believe this was suggested by Ken. Well, as I recall, the worst things in my life were the passing away of my beloved dad in 1987. He only witness(ed) my becoming a lawyer, but not when I entered the prosecution service. And the second and I would say the worst thing and event in my life was the passing of my dearest mom in 2006. I felt alone during that period of bereavement and grief was my decision and in other words, I decided during the event that I would apply for judgeship. In other words, to transition to the judiciary. But that was also in line with my long-term plans. Question number 18 asks about, as far as my career was concerned. Uhh. Would there have been changes I believe. What was the question would somebody tell me because I don't have it here in	He had a tone of resentment when he recounted the death of his dad without witnessing him enter the prosecution service. The passing of his mother made him decide to apply for a judgeship.

		front of me, question number eighteenth. Ian, would you refresh my mind.	
47	Ian	Yes ,sure sir. Sir if there is anything that you want to change in your minor or major decisions in life before what is it? Why?	
48	Interviewee	Oh yes, now I remember. Yes, yes. Well uh, there would be no major changes I suppose but you know decisions made, personal decisions, there would have been, there were mistakes, of course. Nobody's perfect and some I regret it but the point is according to my mom, I no longer recall it, but my mom said it several times to me that at the age of seven, suddenly out of the blue, I went up a perch and this was according to her. I went up the perch and announced that I was going to be a lawyer, at age seven, can you imagine. But as I recall it at that time I thought I would like to go in the military as the dream probably of many boys. Would somebody like to ask me question no 19. Chloe? If you have it In Front of you?	Even though he stated that there have been mistakes that occurred, he does not dwell in it too much because it seems that he took it as part of his growth. He was very delighted talking about how he shouted out his dream during his childhood and I can say that his passion and determination for it did not waver because he was able to pursue his dreams and now a judge.
49	Chloe	How can you describe your life po?	
50	Interviewee	Well, yes, my life is fine, very fine. I'm in the warm embrace of a loving family, my wife and my children, I have "no Known", take note of the word "known", I have no known outstanding health or financial issue. I believe I still retain the mental capacity and acuity, and the physical stamina for reading and for indulging in my hobbies. (No 20. Question no 20).	He assessed his current life in different aspects - familial relationships, physical, mental, financial, and social. Without any known negative and outstanding issues in each of the different aspects led him to conclude that his life now is a very fine one.
51	Chloe	What do you still want to accomplish in life?	

52	Interviewee	Yes. Thank you, thank you for that, Well right now, all I can think of is that, if exigency calls, to be able to render some kind of service to the community or humanity, any kind no matter how modest.	Despite his multiple accomplishments and fulfillments in life, he still intends to be of further service to the community and humanity. He exhibits selflessness. He could have wanted to focus on things for himself and for his family, but he still chooses to look forward to rendering service to a wider group. Note that he even mentioned that the service could be of “any kind no matter how modest.”
		IV Career or Profession Milestone Questions	
53	Interviewee	I will combine my response to questions no 23 and 24 which asked about the key moments in my career.	
54		Describe 2 key moments in your career? • Did these key moments lead to changes in your well-being (as a student, as a person)? • How do you think these key moments changed your outlook in life? (dreams and aspirations)	
55	Interviewee	There were no key dramatic events/moments I could recall. I tried but I can’t recall any. ...	It can be inferred that he sees his career as generally the same that he could not identify any key dramatic events in his career.
56		<i>What are some of the BEST events you can remember in your profession?</i> • <i>When did that happen?</i> • <i>How did that affect your well-being?</i> • <i>How do you think these BEST moments changed your outlook in life? (dreams and aspirations)</i>	

57	Interviewee	But I like and I might proceed to the next question, which asks about the best events in my life. Actually, I couldn't think of any. But since this is an interview and (laughs) I am forced to answer. I would just say that in 1980, I was proud to be chosen as one of the outstanding judges of Manila RTC, for that I was given a plaque, a free dinner at Manila Hotel and P50,000 in prize money; And in 2019, by my peers in the RTC Judges Association also for being one, not just only but being of the outstanding judges. But the important thing, the essence of the above, the reason I mentioned this is not the physical medal, or the plaque, or even the money, but the essence is of course is the kind of public recognition of my humble endeavors and aspirations.	Being chosen as one of the outstanding judges of Manila in two years are the best moments in his profession. He shows humility when he spoke of his awards as some kind of public recognition of his humble endeavors and aspirations.
58		<i>What are some of the WORST things you can remember in your profession?</i> • <i>When did that happen?</i> • <i>How did that affect your well-being?</i> • <i>How do you think these WORST moments changed your outlook in life? (dreams and aspirations)</i>	

59	Interviewee	We are coming in the last leg of our interview and it asked, question no 25 about the worst thing in my profession. Number 1, the slow speed in adapting to the Computer Age. Do you know that it had to take this COVID pandemic to push the judicial authorities to allow more on-line internet inputs and outputs as well, and proceedings in the judicial work and processes? Same thing happens in the National Prosecution Service. The lack of emphasis on and enthusiasm for forensic science in criminal investigation. The lack of presentation of evidence even in legal cases. And finally, the process of the judicial adjudication is still excruciating very slow.	Being an internet savvy himself, he considers the slow speed in both the judicial and national prosecution processes in adapting to the computer age as one of the worst things in his profession. The COVID 19 pandemic has forced the judicial authorities to allow online transactions and proceedings. He also specified the lack of emphasis and enthusiasm for forensic science in criminal investigation and the lack of presentation of evidence as other worst things in his profession. He also raised his frustrations in the excruciatingly slow process of judicial adjudication.
60		<i>Is there anything that you want to recommend to promote a more meaningful and productive life? If YES, what would you like to recommend? Why? If NO, why don't you have anything in mind to recommend?</i>	

61	Interviewee	The penultimate question is asking me to recommend what would promote a more meaningful and productive life and this I could say in summary we are now, and I think this is not something I know, I think probably everyone, even you in La salle knows that we are now in the cups of the fourth industrial revolution. So, what's the point? The points it that it's important that the Philippines is not left behind. I also strongly believe, Ian, Chloe and Ken that there should be reforms in our social values that we should take science and education seriously. We should emphasize the importance of STEM, science, technology, engineering and math, because we are in a developing economy. We should not be producing, sad to say, and some of my colleagues may not like it, we cannot keep on producing lawyers! I think the... we need the STEM, STEM graduates and I believe that's also at present even in the, the problem at the United states. They don't have enough stem, compared for instance to China, the ratio is something like 10 to 1 stem graduates and I think that is also present.	His being well read and up to date with current events is evident on how he sees the importance of STEM in a developing economy like the Philippines. He compares US with China who has less STEM people. He recommends the need for reforms in social values, and the need for the Philippines not to be left behind in this Fourth Industrial Revolution.
62	Chloe	What advice can you give to students like us, as we journey to our respective careers?	
63	Interviewee	And finally, dear classmates, my advice I can give to students, my number 1 advice is to develop the love for reading; To develop a keen sense of curiosity and discovery, and to find a work or a career that is consistent with the aptitude of the student and his skills, be innate as well as be trained, to develop skills. To be able to do some work, to love doing one's work without getting paid for it. I think that would be the most ideal notion. And the last advice that I could impart, and I'm wishing all three of you Ian, Chloe and Ken the best of luck and I appreciate the invitation to be one of a resource person in this project of yours, and I'd like to congratulate your professor also. Any closing remarks from Ian, Kent and Chloe. Thank you so much.	His primary advice includes: to develop the love for reading, to develop a keen sense of curiosity and discovery, and to find a work or a career that is consistent with the aptitude of the student and his skills, and to train and develop skills. He considers loving doing one's work without expecting any payment as the most ideal notion. He wishes the interviewees luck and appreciates the invitation.

64	Chloe	Thank you very much po for your participation. Is there anything you wish to add in your responses before we formally end this interview?	
65	Interviewee	Not at this time, as I've said, I'm wishing all of you the best of luck, and to stay safe in this time of COVID, and good luck to every one of you. Thank you so much. Thank you so much.	It can be deduced that he is also caring.
66	Interviewers	Thank you Sir. Thank you po.	